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THREE PLAYS

BY

HILMA L. ENANDER

Author of
"Glimpses of Great Musicians"
Etc.

RICHARD G. BADGER
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DEDICATED

TO

MISS HILDA SPONG

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IN THE LIGHT OF THE STONE

CHARACTERS

Dr. Brooks
Clara, *his wife*
Mr. Walton, *his friend*
Mr. Patterson, *his host*

IN THE LIGHT OF THE STONE

Scene: Anteroom opening upon ballroom in the Patterson home. Couch next to side wall. Rack, rear, on which a number of men's coats hang. Chairs, table, etc. Door, rear, to ballroom.

As curtain rises, Mrs. Brooks, in evening dress, enters, looks hurriedly around, and stoops down beside couch. She takes a diamond necklace from her bosom, unloosens a hair-pin from her hair, and pins the jewels under the couch. Just as she is about to rise, Mr. Brooks and Mr. Walton enter. Mrs. Brooks is unable to regain her standing position in time, so she stoops again and begins to fumble with her slipper.

MR. BROOKS. It is the strangest thing—Why [*Catching sight of his wife*] Clara, what are you doing here?

MRS. BROOKS. [*Looking over her shoulder*]

Oh, is it you, Henry? It's that buckle again. That makes the third time to-night.

BROOKS. [*As she rises*] They want you in the blue room. It is your turn next, I believe.

MRS. BROOKS. Such a bore! [*Appealing to Mr. Walton*] I do wish when people have their diamonds stolen, that they would choose some other night besides the one in which we turn out.

MR. WALTON. It is abominable! However, it will soon be over. It's too bad you have to go through the ordeal, Mrs. Brooks.

MRS. BROOKS. Have they searched you yet?

WALTON. Oh, yes—they have finished all the men.

MRS. BROOKS. I'm afraid they didn't search them very thoroughly then.

WALTON. They did me up pretty well. Thought I was a suspicious character, I suppose.

MRS. BROOKS. [*Laughingly*] Are you sure you haven't hidden the gems away in the heels of your shoes?

BROOKS. Clara, they're waiting for you.

MRS. BROOKS. All right, honey. [*Kisses her hand at him and goes out rear door. Brooks and Walton light cigars and smoke during following scene*]

WALTON. It's a nasty business.

BROOKS. Yes, it's too bad. Patterson felt humiliated about the searching of the guests.

WALTON. Then why did he do it?

BROOKS. The detectives wouldn't see any other way.

WALTON. How did it all happen?

BROOKS. No one seems to know. Even Mrs. Patterson isn't sure when she missed the necklace.

WALTON. I don't remember seeing it on her when I came in.

BROOKS. What time did you come?

WALTON. Ten.

BROOKS. It must have been stolen early in the evening then.

WALTON. Very likely. I feel sorry for Patterson. He looks all cut up.

BROOKS. No wonder. Everyone is up in arms against him. Do you remember the Bretons?

WALTON. No.

BROOKS. [*Sitting*] I guess they left before you came to the city. It was a similar case to this. Mrs. Breton lost a very handsome tiara at her daughter's coming-out party. Everybody was searched and everybody was furious. The tiara was finally found in a little pawnshop, but

the Breton family found the city so warm after the episode that they moved somewhere up north.

WALTON. Well, I hope the Pattersons will find their necklace.

BROOKS. On the guests?

WALTON. No, of course not! I hope they won't find it. Damn it all, I don't know what I hope.

BROOKS. If the servants had not been old and trustworthy ones—

WALTON But they always have to be old and trustworthy ones in cases like this.

MRS. BROOKS. [*Entering*] Why such a petulant tone? Has anything gone wrong?

WALTON. [*Standing*] No. How did you come out?

MRS. BROOKS. Innocent. Stainless as a newborn babe. Mrs. Patterson apologizing on one side, her sister eating humble pie on the other, and I, the offended queen, in the center.

WALTON. Did you relent?

MRS. BROOKS. At the end. I consented to forgive the insult. Mrs. Patterson thanked me with tears in her eyes. Honey, dear, [*to Mr. Brooks*] there's a telephone call for you. They're holding the wire. I tried to answer in your place but it was the Stainer family and they wouldn't listen

to me. The baby is worse, I suppose.

BROOKS. Why didn't you tell me before? [*Exit* BROOKS, *rear door.*]

MRS. BROOKS. There he goes again! Really, Mr. Walton, I'm getting jealous of that Stainer family. Mr. Brooks spends more time over there than he does at his own fireside.

WALTON. Is the child very ill?

MRS. BROOKS. I suppose so. Typhoid, I think,—or is it measles? I've forgotten. Anyway, every time we go out to spend the evening, we have to come tearing back like mad. The child always seems to get worse when we begin to have a good time.

WALTON. I suppose this means another rush home for you.

MRS. BROOKS. I suppose so. Perhaps I had better get ready. Will you get my wrap? Ask the maid for the blue one. She knows it. I think I had better wait here for Mr. Brooks.

WALTON. I'll bring it directly. [*Exit rear.*]

[*Mrs. Brooks rushes over to the couch, unpins the necklace but has no time to conceal it before her husband enters.*]

BROOKS. Clara, get your things. The child is dying. We must go at once.

MRS. BROOKS. Dying! [*Backing up towards*

coat-rack.]

BROOKS. Yes. Hurry.

MRS. BROOKS. But won't it look rather strange?

BROOKS. What?

MRS. BROOKS. This rushing away so hurriedly during the search.

BROOKS. We can't help that. This is a matter of life and death. Where is your wrap?

MRS. BROOKS. [*Partly breaking down*] Oh, Henry, I'm so afraid—I'm so afraid. We have to go, I suppose. You say she's dying. Are you sure she's dying?

BROOKS. [*Softening*] Yes, but don't feel that way about it. [*Crosses over and takes one of her hands. With a quick movement, full of terror, she slips the necklace into the pocket of the coat nearest her.*] We'll manage to pull her through. Where is your wrap?

[*Enter* WALTON *with wrap.*]

MRS. BROOKS. Here it is now.

[WALTON *assists her while* BROOKS *takes down coat containing necklace.*]

BROOKS. [*Putting on coat*] It's a hurry call, Walton. You'll give my excuses to Patterson, won't you? I don't like to disturb him now. If I only [*Puts hand into pocket. Pause. Pulls out*

necklace.] Why—here's the necklace.

MRS. BROOKS *and* WALTON. Necklace!

BROOKS. Yes—Mrs. Patterson's. It must be. Look at it, Clara. You know it when you see it, don't you? Isn't this hers?

MRS. BROOKS. It does look something like it.

WALTON. Somebody put it into your pocket.

BROOKS. It looks that way.

MRS. BROOKS. But why? Why should they put it into your pocket?

WALTON. To throw suspicion upon him of course.

MRS. BROOKS. Suspicion upon—how dare you say such a thing about my husband!

BROOKS. Hush, dear. Walton, will you ask Patterson to step out here?

MRS. BROOKS. What are you going to do?

BROOKS. Give him the necklace, of course. Call him, please.

MRS. BROOKS. [*Holding back* WALTON] No, no,—you must not go! I won't let you!

BROOKS. Clara!

MRS. BROOKS. Don't you see they'll think all sorts of things, Henry? They'll imagine you put it there,—that you were afraid and tried to cover up your guilt with a trick? Don't you see you are setting a trap for yourself?

BROOKS. Don't be foolish, Clara. We have to give up the necklace. [*To* WALTON] Get him, please.

[*Exit* WALTON.]

MRS. BROOKS. But if he should suspect!

BROOKS. [*Cheerfully*] He won't. Patterson knows me.

MRS. BROOKS. But if he should—if he should! It would kill me!

[*Enter* PATTERSON *and* WALTON.]

PATTERSON. You wished to see me? Ah, are you going so soon?

BROOKS. Yes—a call—an urgent one. But that isn't why I wanted to see you. The fact is I found Mrs. Patterson's necklace.

PATTERSON. Necklace! Where?

BROOKS. In my coat-pocket.

PATTERSON. Coat-pocket!

BROOKS. Yes. I was just putting my hand into it to get my scarf and I found the necklace.

[PATTERSON *is silent.*]

BROOKS. You don't believe me!

PATTERSON. [*Constrainedly*] Of course I believe you. Still it seems very queer. Was anybody here when it happened?

BROOKS. My wife and Mr. Walton.

MRS. BROOKS. Yes. He just put his hand into

his pocket and pulled out the necklace, saying: "Here's the necklace."

PATTERSON. When was this?

WALTON. Just a minute ago. Just before I called you.

PATTERSON. You were all three together?

WALTON. Yes.

PATTERSON. For how long?

WALTON. A minute or so before it happened. I had just stepped out a few moments before to get Mrs. Brooks' wrap.

PATTERSON. You left her then with Mr. Brooks?

WALTON. No. Mr. Brooks was answering a telephone call then.

PATTERSON. [*To* MRS. BROOKS] You were here alone then?

MRS. BROOKS. Yes.

PATTERSON. And no one entered the room while you were here?

MRS. BROOKS. No one.

PATTERSON. How long were you alone?

MRS. BROOKS. About two minutes, I should say.

PATTERSON. [*To* BROOKS] And then you joined her?

BROOKS. Yes. But here, take your necklace.

[*Hands him necklace.*] I'll have to go. I'll drop in to-morrow and answer any questions you wish to ask.

PATTERSON. Just a moment. You two gentlemen came in here together just after the search?

BROOKS *and* WALTON. Yes.

PATTERSON. Was there anyone in the room when you entered it?

WALTON. Yes.—Mrs.—[BROOKS *silences him with a look.*]

BROOKS. Really, Patterson, this goes beyond my patience. Take your necklace. I know nothing except what I told you. Now let me go.

PATTERSON. [*Barring door*] Not yet. The necklace was put into your pocket while the men were being searched, for I had a man go through this room just a moment before and there was nothing here then.

BROOKS. You accuse me then of—

PATTERSON. I do not. I accuse no one, but I feel,—in fact, I know that you are shielding someone. If Mrs.—

BROOKS. Patterson! Let's end this farce. Take your stones and I'll see you to-morrow.

PATTERSON. I think, perhaps, Mrs. Brooks will be able to throw more light upon the subject.

BROOKS. [*Threateningly*] What do you mean?

PATTERSON. Don't take it that way. I simply meant she might prove a valuable witness. You see she was the only one here when the thief hid the diamonds.

BROOKS. Clara, do you know anything about this business?

MRS. BROOKS Of course not! Why should I?

BROOKS. If you do, tell him by all means. If you saw anything, speak up. Tell him everything.

MRS. BROOKS. [*Laughing*] My dear boy!

BROOKS. Clara!

MRS. BROOKS. [*Soberly*] I know nothing, Henry, except that the jewels were stolen and were found in your pocket.

PATTERSON. You saw nobody come into the room?

MRS. BROOKS. No.

PATTERSON. You saw nobody hide the jewels?

MRS. BROOKS. No one.

PATTERSON. You are quite positive no one entered the room unobserved by you?

MRS. BROOKS. Quite positive.

PATTERSON. I'm sorry, Brooks.

BROOKS. That's all right. I understand.

Only do it quietly—that's all I ask.

[PATTERSON *starts for door. Mrs. Brooks steps before him and blocks way.*]

MRS. BROOKS. What's the matter? What are you going to do?

PATTERSON. I'm very sorry, Mrs. Brooks, but as long as suspicions point—

MRS. BROOKS. You're not going to arrest him!

PATTERSON. I'm afraid I shall have to turn him over to the detectives. If further investigations prove him innocent, I shall be glad to apologize.

MRS. BROOKS. But you don't know what you are doing. He's an innocent man—an innocent man, do you hear? He doesn't know anything about the necklace—I tell you he doesn't know.

PATTERSON. Perhaps not.

MRS. BROOKS. Then why don't you find the guilty one? Why don't you find the person who put the necklace there? Why don't you find him? Why don't you find him?

PATTERSON. [*Hesitatingly as he looks at her*] Can you help us find him?

MRS. BROOKS. [*In a dazed manner*] Can I help you find him? I don't know—I don't know—but let me think. [*Draws hand over fore-*

head.] Perhaps if you let me think, I can help you.

[BROOKS *pushes a chair forward and she seats herself. The others sit.*]

PATTERSON. Well?

MRS. BROOKS. Of course I don't want to throw suspicion upon anyone.

PATTERSON. No, we understand that, Mrs. Brooks.

MRS. BROOKS. [*To her husband*] You know I wouldn't do that.

BROOKS. Yes, I know, Clara. Don't be afraid. Tell what you know.

MRS. BROOKS. But I don't know very much. I didn't see much.

PATTERSON. What did you see?

MRS. BROOKS. [*To husband*] It was after you left me.

BROOKS. Yes.

MRS. BROOKS. You went to answer that telephone call.

BROOKS. Yes.

MRS. BROOKS. And I was standing by the door.

BROOKS. Yes. Go on.

MRS. BROOKS. [*Rising and going to door, and taking hold of curtain*] Right next to the cur-

tain, like this.

WALTON. Then a person entering wouldn't see you at first.

MRS. BROOKS. No,—he didn't.

PATTERSON. Then someone did come in!

MRS. BROOKS. Yes.

BROOKS. Who?

MRS. BROOKS. I don't know. [*They all rise.*]

BROOKS. You don't know!

MRS. BROOKS. No. I didn't see his face.

PATTERSON. Go on.

MRS. BROOKS. He didn't know I was here and I didn't move.

BROOKS. Yes.

MRS. BROOKS. And he went over to the couch—

ALL. Couch!

MRS. BROOKS. [*Crosses room and kneels down beside couch.*] Right here.

PATTERSON. Then they must have been there during the search.

BROOKS. Yes. They must have been hidden before.

WALTON. Yes.

PATTERSON. That's why we didn't find them.

BROOKS. That's why. Go on.

MRS. BROOKS. Well, he took them out, he

took them out. He had pinned them in some way under the couch cover here, and when he pulled them out, I saw them glitter even where I stood. Then he slipped them into a coat-pocket and left the room. [*She rises.*]

BROOKS. And you didn't see him as he went out?

MRS. BROOKS. No.

PATTERSON. Can you describe him in any way?

MRS. BROOKS. [*Uncertainly*] Well, he was tall, rather thin, I should say.

BROOKS. Black hair?

MRS. BROOKS. No—brown.

PATTERSON. Dress suit?

MRS. BROOKS. Yes.

PATTERSON. Beard?

MRS. BROOKS. I don't know.

BROOKS. But as he walked out of the room, he faced you, didn't he?

MRS. BROOKS. Yes.

BROOKS. Didn't you catch sight of his face then?

MRS. BROOKS. No.

BROOKS. Why not?

MRS. BROOKS. I don't know. I simply did not see it, that's all.

BROOKS. Were you looking towards him?

MRS. BROOKS. Yes.

BROOKS. And didn't see his face?

MRS. BROOKS. No.

BROOKS. My dear Clara, do collect yourself. Try to remember. Don't you see you have told too much now to try to hide anything?

MRS. BROOKS. I'm not trying to hide anything. I simply didn't see his face—that's all. I don't know anything more about it. Take me home, Henry.

BROOKS. Not yet. You must tell all you know first, Clara.

MRS. BROOKS. All I know!

BROOKS. Yes. You haven't told enough.

MRS. BROOKS. But I've told all I know. Take me home, Henry. I'm so tired.

BROOKS. Tell me the name of the man first.

MRS. BROOKS. But I don't know his name. Take me away from here or you will be sorry.

BROOKS. His name first.

MRS. BROOKS. But I tell you I don't know his name—I don't know it—I don't know it.

PATTERSON. Then I shall tell you, Mrs. Brooks.

MRS. BROOKS. You!

PATTERSON. Yes. You are a very clever

woman, Mrs. Brooks, but you are not clever enough to shield your husband.

MRS. BROOKS. You don't think now that—!

PATTERSON. More than ever.

BROOKS. Shall I come with you?

PATTERSON. Yes.

[PATTERSON *and* BROOKS *start for door. Mrs.* BROOKS *rushes forward.*]

MRS. BROOKS. No! No! Don't go,—don't go!

PATTERSON. Well?

MRS. BROOKS. I'll tell you—I'll tell you all. I know—I know—who—stole—the—necklace.

BROOKS. Clara!

PATTERSON. Who stole it?

[MRS. BROOKS *tries to speak but cannot.*]

BROOKS. Clara, don't speak!

MRS. BROOKS. I must—I must. I—I—stole it.

PATTERSON. You! [MRS. BROOKS *nods.*]

BROOKS. It's a lie! Don't you believe it! It's all a damned lie. She's getting up to save me.

MRS. BROOKS. No, no,—it's not a lie. I stole —I always wanted it. It glittered so. I used to watch it whenever she wore it. It always looked so well on white. Oh, you don't understand—you can't—but the light of it dazzled me,—I

simply had to have it—I had to. So I stole it. I put it under there. [*Pointing to couch.*] Then you came in. [*Looks at* BROOKS *and* WALTON.]

BROOKS. And you said you were fastening your buckle.

MRS. BROOKS. [*Nods*] Yes,—that's what I said—that's what I said. Then afterward I took it out—then you came in [*To* BROOKS]. You said she was dying. Don't you remember you said she was dying? [BROOKS *nods.*] And all the time I felt as if I were dying. I had it in my hand—in my hand just like this, and I didn't have a chance to hide it. Then you came towards me and then I couldn't hide it, so I slipped it into a coat-pocket. I didn't know it was yours, Henry,—I didn't know it was yours. [*Breaks down.*]

BROOKS. It's a lie! You don't believe it, Patterson?

MRS. BROOKS. It's the truth—it's the truth. You have to believe it.

WALTON. [*At door*] Here comes Mrs. Patterson. What shall I tell her?

PATTERSON. Here—give her the necklace. Tell her I found it in the conservatory. Say that she must have dropped it there.

[*Exit* WALTON *with necklace.*]

MRS. BROOKS. [*Dropping down upon her knees before* PATTERSON] You mean that? You really mean that?

PATTERSON. [*Drawing her to her feet*] Of course. There, now, don't feel that way about it. We all make mistakes, you know, and no one shall hear of this, I promise you. There now, don't feel so badly about it.

MRS. BROOKS. [*To husband*] Tell him—he found my soul to-night—and gave it—back—to me.

BROOKS. He knows, dear, he knows. Come now with me. We're going back to Stainer's now.

MRS. BROOKS. And life—and life. We're going back to life.

Curtain.

THE MAN WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND

CHARACTERS

TED CORSON
MINNA, *his wife*
MISS BRADFORD

THE MAN WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND

Scene: Interior of TED CORSON'S *shack in the desert. The walls are rough and unplastered; the table, rude; the chairs, homemade. A shelf on one wall supports a wooden clock and a kerosene lamp. A cupboard stands to the left. Near this, some nails are driven into the wall and support one or two blankets, a bit of harness, and some clothes. Window, rear, opens upon the desert. A box filled with flowers stands upon the window-sill. Door, rear. As the curtain rises,* TED CORSON, *a young man about twenty-eight, is discovered leaning out of the window and talking to an unseen person outside. It is about seven o'clock and the light of the setting sun casts a red glow over the room.*

TED. Has the mail-wagon come in yet, Jake? What's that? No mail! Oh! Too busy? I see. Well, we'll get it in the morning then. Did you see Henry? Oh, yes, I know all about that.

Married last week, wasn't he? Wedding-cake and all the frills. Cost him two weeks' diggings, they say, without the drinks. What's that? Bringing the girl out here? What's the matter with the fool? What? Oh,—only a passenger. I see. What? Asking for me? Me! You're crazy. No girl would come out here and ask for me. If—who's that, Jake? Is she the one? Say, old man, she's coming this way. Head her off, will you? I don't care—anything, only head her off.

[*He comes away from the window and stands listening. Then with an awkward feeling of self-consciousness, he buttons up his sand-colored khaki and gives a jerky, effortless pull at his gaiters. There is dread as well as anticipation in his movements and the look on the face he turns towards the door is not a particularly pleasant one. There is a knock. He draws a deep breath and then opens the door. A pretty woman, about twenty, enters. She is dressed in a well-made tailor suit and carries herself with a distinctive air of careless self-assertion. Her hands are outstretched and her lips are smiling in delighted recognition.*]

TED. [*Stammering*] Nan!

NAN. Yes, it is I. Aren't you glad to see me?

TED. Of course. But why are you here?

NAN. To see you. Aren't you going to shake hands?

TED. [*Grasping her outstretched hand*] It's such a surprise. Why didn't you write and tell me you were coming?

NAN. I did. I wrote last Monday.

TED. That's why I didn't get your letter then. It's only due to-day. Well, [*with an ill-defined, abortive attempt at heartiness*] it does seem good to see you again. When are you going back?

NAN. I'm not going back.

TED. [*Aghast*] Not going back!

NAN. [*Smiling and shaking her head*] No, I've come out here to stay.

TED. But you can't do that. There's no place to put you. There's no hotel and no boarding-house or anything of that sort, and then—oh, it's out of the question! You'll have to go back.

NAN. You're not very hospitable.

TED. I'm sorry, but you see it's impossible. You'll have to go.

NAN. But my cousin is here.

TED. Cousin!

NAN. Yes,—James, I mean,—Reverend James Clough. He—he—won't you understand?

TED. [*Stammering*] You don't mean—

NAN. Yes, I do mean that. I made him come on that account. He's right over there in the wagon. He was on his way to Salt Lake City, you know, and had a twenty-one day ticket, so when he heard that—that—well, he took a stop-over at Preston,—that's all.

TED. But if—

NAN. [*Interrupting*] Oh, I know what you are going to say. You are going to tell me that I'll have no society, no teas, no theaters, and all that. I know all that, Ted. I've taken it all into consideration. There isn't anything that you can tell me that I haven't told myself again and again for the last two years. I'm ready to meet all these sacrifices. I'm ready for anything as long as I have you.

TED. [*Patiently*] You don't understand. It's all very well to think about these sacrifices and to say that you are going to meet them, but it's very different when it comes to the real thing. You may be able to endure it for a few days or, perhaps, a few weeks, but you won't stand it in the long run. I know that, for I've tried it myself and I know what I'm talking

about. Why, the men here—Nan, if you knew the men!

NAN. The driver seemed all right.

TED. He's different from the others. They are—oh, I don't mean to say that they're all a bad lot, for some of them are pretty decent,—college fellows, you know, roughing it a bit—but most of them—well, they're not the sort you'd like to know. I meant to write to you and tell you all about it,—that it wasn't what I expected and that all the plans we had made were impossible. In fact, I did start half a dozen letters but I tore them up. You know it is hard to explain things on paper.

NAN. It's hard for me to understand when you don't explain.

TED. [*Impatiently*] But you can't expect a man to sit down and write about a life that is killing him.

NAN. [*In a choked voice*] You mean, then, that you do not want to—marry me?

TED. [*Sulkily*] Everything is changed now.

NAN. No, no! It's you who have changed. I—I—oh, Ted, don't you love me any more?

TED. [*His arms about her*] Love you! Love you! It's this very love that's driving me mad. Oh, Nan, don't you see how much I want you?

Don't you see? And now you're making it so hard for me by coming out here.

NAN. Then don't send me away. I'm so tired of the city. I'm always wondering what you are doing out here. Oh, I've tried to think it was for the best,—that you ought to have your start in life and not be hampered in any way by a woman, but I couldn't stand it—I had to come. I suppose you think me foolish and selfish and all that, but I wish you had never left the city. I wish there were no mines, no desert, no—[*She breaks down and sobs.*]

TED. Nan, I should have told you long ago—

NAN. Told me—what—

TED. I—I—you see—

NAN. You don't mean that—

TED. Yes—I'm married.

NAN. Married! You married! You—[*She stops and laughs brokenly.*] How funny!

TED. Nan!

NAN. But why—why?

[*Minna, unnoticed, appears in the doorway. She wears an old-fashioned gray hat and a shabby cotton gown. She looks rather pale and tired, and there is an air of almost indifference about her as she watches the two before her.*]

TED. I don't know. She came to Silver Camp when I was down with the fever. She was a nurse, you know. She pulled me through and then—I married her.

NAN. But if you—

[*She stops on seeing* MINNA *in doorway.* TED, *following the direction of her glance, also sees his wife standing there.* MINNA'S *face, however, betrays no sign that she has heard. Her eyes seek those of her husband with a calm negative glance. He shifts his feet uneasily before he speaks.*]

TED. Why, Minna, is that you? This is Miss Bradford, an old friend of mine. She has dropped in to see us on her way to Salt Lake City.

MINNA. [*In a courteous monotone*] I'm pleased to meet you. It's very kind of you to look us up. [*She hangs up her hat as she speaks.*] We don't have many visitors, you know. I trust you will stay with us for some time.

NAN. [*Grasping the last remnant of her self-control*] No, no, I didn't intend to stay. I just thought I would stop for a moment. You see, Ted and I were such good friends. But I must be going. I'm sure the wagon is about to start. [*Looking out of window.*] Yes,—there goes the driver. Good-bye,—I'm sorry I can't

stop—good-bye, Mrs. Corson, I'm so glad I met you—good-bye, Ted.

[*Exit* NAN.]

MINNA. [*Standing in doorway and looking after her with strange reflecting eyes*] "She pulled me through and then I married her."

TED. [*Starting*] What do you mean?

MINNA. [*Simply*] Tell me all. At least I have a right to know.

TED. [*Breaking down*] Very well. I'll tell you all.

[*She closes the door and lights the lamp on the shelf. The sunset glow which is already fading, dies away during the following scene.* TED *sinks down on a chair near the table and drops his face into his hands.* MINNA *seats herself opposite.*]

MINNA. Well?

[*He looks up surprised. Her voice is gentle, almost reassuring. As he meets her eyes, she smiles.*]

TED. [*Miserably*] It all happened three years ago. I was working in Balgiere's studio at the time, doing odd jobs,—scrap work to keep body and soul together. She used to come there. Balgiere was doing her portrait. He never went out, you know. That's how I met her and then—

MINNA. You became engaged?

TED. [*Starting up*] No, no. You don't think I would have asked you if—

MINNA. Go on.

TED. One day Balgiere was late. I was alone with her. I told her I loved her. I said I was going out west. She wanted to come too, but I wouldn't let her. The next day I broke away and came here. I've written twice to her since.

MINNA. And then you met me?

TED. Yes,—then I met you.

MINNA. [*Briskly*] And I nursed you and then you married me.

TED. Don't! When I think of all you have done for me, all you have gone through for my sake, I feel like a miserable cur for bringing this upon you. I meant to write to her—

MINNA. Then you didn't write after you had married me?

TED. No. I did expect to do it and tell her all. I suppose in the end I should have—but then you see she came before I got around to do it.

MINNA. And you love her still?

TED. [*Hesitatingly*] I suppose so.

MINNA. [*Drawing a deep breath*] Then there is only one thing to do, and that is to drive

me to Preston to-night.

TED. Preston!

MINNA. Yes. I'm going to take the morning train for Texas.

TED. Texas! You mean—

MINNA. Yes. I'm going back to my father.

TED. [*Dazed*] But why?

MINNA. After a time you can get a divorce and go back to her.

TED. And you?

MINNA. I'll stay on the ranch for a while and then I'll go to Los Angeles. You know I had a good opening promised me there at the hospital.

TED. Then you'll go back to your work?

MINNA. Yes,—unless my father needs me on the ranch.

TED. [*In sudden heat*] But this is impossible! We're talking nonsense.

MINNA. On the contrary, we are talking very sensibly.

TED. But I'll not do it!

MINNA. [*Coolly*] Then I shall do it myself. If you will not drive me to Preston to-night and, in this way, save me the trouble of carrying my suit-case, I shall go myself. My dear Ted, [*leaning forward and placing her hand on his arm*] do you think it is possible for us to live together

knowing what we know?

TED. [*Weakly*] We've been very happy together, haven't we?

MINNA. But we didn't know—then.

TED. If you could forget—

MINNA. No, no. If we lived in the city, we might be able to manage. But here—here in the desert—it is all so different. We can't escape each other. We have to meet day after day, always knowing—No, no, Ted, I'll go. It's better so.

TED. [*In pitying complaisance as his mind reverts back to his own troubles*] But it will be of no use. Minna. She won't have me. I've been such an infernal scoundrel.

[MINNA *laughs lightly, her imaginative sympathy forgiving his lack of moral severity.*]

MINNA. Don't worry. When a woman loves a man, she doesn't care whether he is a scoundrel or not.

TED. But what of you?

MINNA. Oh, don't worry about me. I've always been longing for something I couldn't have and crying for something I couldn't get. A disappointment more or less won't hurt me now. It will only send me back to my work a

little stronger, a little wiser.

TED. It doesn't seem right.

MINNA. But it's the way of this foolish old world, you know. We're all reaching for some silly moon. What does it matter if the moon turns out to be green cheese? We've been reaching for it. That's enough.

TED. That I should bring this upon you!

MINNA. [*Rising*] You will drive me, then?

TED. If you—No, I won't—I won't do it!

MINNA. Very well. [*She goes to the window and speaks through it to the unseen* JAKE] Jake! Harness up Dick and Dolly, will you? I'm going to Preston to-night. Yes,—I want you too. No, —take the laprobe instead. Hurry, though. I want to catch the four o'clock train.

TED. [*As she turns*] Nan! What are you thinking about?

MINNA. That you had better pay Jake for working overtime. I think I had better carry my blue dress and wear this one. It will be chilly in the desert. [TED *sinks back into his chair and passively watches her pack her suit-case during the following dialogue.*] Ted, you won't forget to put on an extra blanket on cold nights, will you?

TED. No.

MINNA. I'm afraid you will. And you won't sleep out-of-doors any more?

TED. I promise to behave.

MINNA. [*Stopping a moment in her packing and smiling at him*] I'm almost afraid to leave you.

TED. Then why—

MINNA. [*Hastily resuming her packing*] But you'll remember, won't you?

TED. Yes.

MINNA. Ted,—do you know I feel rather sorry about leaving the desert?

TED. Sorry! I thought you hated it.

MINNA. I did at first, but I've grown to be quite fond of it. You remember that first night?

TED. The night you came?

MINNA. Stupid! I mean the night we watched the stars.

TED. Yes.

MINNA. [*Stopping again in her packing*] Do you know, the desert had never affected me before that time? I seemed to see it that night for the first time in my life, and it was as if I saw a strange and an unfamiliar face. There was something untamable about it all, something that made it akin to me, to my own wild spirit, and I felt my heart leap out towards it in a sort of

black fraternization that made the dreary gauntness, the common-place unmeaning ugliness, the dead monotony of the far-stretching sand—all fade away and vanish into a mirage of imperturbable beauty, as eternal as the hills, as enduring as time.

TED. [*Groping for words*] It will be lonesome without you.

MINNA. Perhaps. There will be no one to cook for you. That reminds me. [*She goes to the cupboard.*] There are three loaves of bread left. They ought to last a while. And the pudding is up there on the top shelf. I only wish I had baked some cake yesterday—but I didn't know then. Well, [*looking at the clock*] it's eight o'clock—about time to start. Let's see—I feel as if I had forgotten to pack something. There's my black cape. [*Takes cape from nail on wall and tries to put it into suit-case.*] I might put that in. No,—there isn't room. Well, I'll have to leave it, I suppose. There [*locking suit-case*] that's ready. Now my hat. I'm glad it's gray. It won't show the dust even if I don't wear a veil. Is it on straight? Now my jacket. [TED *helps her into the jacket.*] Ted, do you know the first thing I'm going to get when I reach Texas?

TED. What?

MINNA. A tailor-made suit. I'm so tired of this sack coat. I always did look like a barrel in it. What's that? [*She runs to the window.*] Oh, all right, Jake. I'll be out in a minute. [*Turning.*] Let me see,—have I everything? Hat, coat, suit-case, purse, gloves,—oh, my gloves! Where did I put them? Here they are. Now I guess I'm ready. Well, I suppose I shall have to say good-bye.

TED. Good-bye. [*They shake hands.*]

MINNA. You'll take good care of yourself, won't you?

TED. Yes.

MINNA. And water my plants?—I shouldn't like to think of my flowers dying out here.

TED. I'll water them. Is there anything else?

MINNA. No, that's all. *She goes to the door and opens it.*]

TED. Minna! I can't do it—I can't!

MINNA. [*Turning and going to him*] What is it? What's the matter?

TED. I can't give you up. I shouldn't say it, I know, for you'll never believe me now, but I love you, I love you! I thought it was the other one but it's you, Minna, it's you, and I can't give you up.

MINNA. [*Drawing his face down to hers*] Don't you see I want to stay?

Curtain.

ON THE TRAIL

CHARACTERS

JIM BRYCE
BERTHA, *his wife*
JACK SAUNDERS, *a thief*
MAX BRIGHTON, *a sheriff*
BEN WIGGINS, *his assistant*

ON THE TRAIL

SCENE

Scene: Interior of a mountain shack. Rough, unplastered walls. Door, rear. Door, right, close to rear. Table, left, set for one. An old-fashioned heating stove, extreme left. Bertha, a young woman about twenty, is sitting at the table and eating her supper as the curtain rises. She is reading from a book as she eats. A lighted lamp gives the time of day. A heavy knock at the door brings her, startled, to her feet. She takes a gun from the wall and then unlocks the door. Jack Saunders, revolver in hand, enters. He is black with dirt and dust.

BERTHA. Who are you?

JACK. Help! I want your help. [*Approaches her with raised revolver.*] Will you help me?

BERTHA. Drop that gun!

[*He drops the revolver to the floor.*]

JACK. It's no good anyway. I emptied it down there in the gully.

BERTHA. Oh!

JACK. Don't worry. I didn't touch them.

BERTHA. Then you're followed?

JACK. Yes.

BERTHA. A horse thief?

JACK. No.

BERTHA. A criminal?

JACK. Perhaps.

BERTHA. And you want me to hide you?

JACK. Yes.

BERTHA. Well, I won't do it, so you might as well go at once before they come.

JACK. I can't go any further. I'm done for —done for—oh God! to be cornered like this!

[*He sinks into a chair and buries his face in his hands. She puts her rifle down on the table.*]

BERTHA. Then why did you do it?

JACK. Do what?

BERTHA. Murder the—

JACK [*Starting up*] Who said I murdered anyone?

BERTHA. I thought—

JACK. No, it wasn't that. It was only money —a few thousands taken from a milksop who never earned them. He deserved to lose them.

BERTHA. So you're a—thief.

JACK. Somebody else would have taken them if I hadn't. And I needed them. I wanted them for her.

BERTHA. Her!

JACK. Yes,—my mother. But they came too late. I couldn't save her after all, and now they're after me.

BERTHA. How many?

JACK. Two.

BERTHA. Who are they?

JACK. The sheriff and another man.

BERTHA. Of Breton?

JACK. No—Proctor. Do you know them?

BERTHA. No. I know the one at Breton. Let me think—

JACK. [*Approaching her*] Are you going to hide me?

BERTHA. I've told you "No" once before.

JACK. Then do you know what will happen?

BERTHA. What?

JACK. When they knock at that door over there, I'm going to take your gun and blow out my brains.

BERTHA. No! No!

JACK. Not a pretty sight for a lady to see, is it? Besides, it might spoil your floor.

BERTHA. You wouldn't be such a coward!

JACK. And every night after this you can say to yourself: "Here's the spot where that poor fool died because I wouldn't reach out my hand to help him."

BERTHA. You are a coward after all.

JACK. Yes, but I'm not a fool anyway. They'll never take me—they'll never do that.

BERTHA. Listen! There's a path that leads up to the old Blue Mine. It's half a mile up the trail, and a good hiding place. Go there and I'll send them away; only go—go!

JACK. I can't do it. I tell you, I'm done for. Sorry—you're a good sort, after all—I shouldn't have talked the way I did. [*He sinks into a chair.*]—Thank you all the same—Give me a drink.

[*She gives him a glass of water and he drinks. As she takes the glass from him, she assumes a listening attitude.*]

BERTHA. They're coming.

[*He starts up and seizes the gun. She throws herself upon him.*]

BERTHA. No! No! Not that! Not that!

JACK. Why not?

BERTHA. I'm going to save you.—I'm going to save you from yourself. [*She takes the gun away from him.*] Lock that door. [*He locks the*

door as she hangs up rifle.]

BERTHA. Have they seen you?

JACK. No.

BERTHA. Will they know you?

JACK. Only from description.

BERTHA. Take off your coat. [*He takes off his khaki coat. She points to his light negligee shirt.*] Roll down that collar. [*He rolls down collar.*] Now put this on. [*She takes down a miner's blue shirt from a nail in the wall, and throws it to him. He slips it on, while she rolls up his coat and stuffs it with his hat into the stove.*] Pull up your sleeves. No,—leave it open at the neck. Here, put on this belt. [*Hands him belt.*] There—that's better. Now, wash your face. [*Points to basin of water in corner.—Knock at door.*]

JACK. But—

BERTHA. Wash your face! [*He washes while she puts an extra plate, cup and saucer on table.*] Put on these. [*Hands him a pair of spectacles.*] [*Knock at door.*]

JACK. But I can't see anything.

BERTHA. So much the better. Now, sit down,—no, on the other side. [*He sits on farther side and faces audience.*] [*Knock at door.*]

BERTHA. [*Towards door*] Yes? [*To Jack.*]

You're a miner—remember?

JACK. Yes.

BERTHA. And my husband.

JACK. Yes.

BERTHA. Now eat. [*He begins to eat.*] Let me do the talking.

JACK. With pleasure.

[*She opens the door. The sheriff and his assistant stand outside.*]

SHERIFF. I'm Sheriff Brighton and this is Ben Wiggins, my assistant. We come from Proctor. We're looking for a thief.

BERTHA. [*Wonderingly*] Thief! Then why—

SHERIFF. He came this way. We're close on his tracks. Is he hiding here?

BERTHA. [*Indignantly*] Hiding!

SHERIFF. No offense, ma'am, only we want to be sure, you know. Law's law—there's no dodging that fact.

BERTHA. Come in then and see for yourself. [*They come in and Bertha closes the door.*]

SHERIFF. [*Looking at* JACK] Who's that?

BERTHA. Why, that's Jim, my husband. Oh, perhaps he can help you. [*Turning to Jack.*] Jim, these men are hunting for a thief. Did you see any stranger around the mine this afternoon?

SHERIFF. Not this afternoon. It was to-night.

JACK. What kind of man was he?

SHERIFF. Tallish,—wore a slouch hat. Here's his description. [*Hunts in his pockets and pulls out a paper which he reads.*] "Five feet, eight inches. Broad shouldered. Brown hair. Grey eyes. Dressed in khaki."

BERTHA. Did you see him on your way home, Jim?

JACK. No. Didn't meet anyone on the way.

SHERIFF. When did you come in?

JACK. About an hour ago.

BEN. Aw—that's why you didn't see him then. This man's going up the trail now. He's just ahead of us.

SHERIFF. Where do you work?

JACK. Blue Mine.

BERTHA. It's half a mile up the trail.

SHERIFF. Good hiding-place?

JACK. Well,—perhaps.

BERTHA. [*Seating herself on the arm of* JACK'S *chair and bending over him*] It's a good hiding-place for my Jim. It keeps him away from me all day, doesn't it?

BEN. [*Disgustedly, as he turns away*] Mush!

SHERIFF. Well, we'll have to be moving.

BERTHA. [*Coming forward*] Do you want Jim to take you up the trail?

SHERIFF. No.—I guess not. We'll find our way all right.

BERTHA. Take our lantern then with you. The trail is pretty hard. It starts right behind the house next to the big boulder.

JACK. You can't miss it.

BERTHA. Here's the lantern. Good luck to you.

[BEN WIGGINS *goes towards stove.* BERTHA *watches him in feverish excitement.*]

SHERIFF. Thank you. Come along, Ben. [*BEN puts his hand on the stove handle.*]

BEN. Wait till I warm up. The air is getting cold. Any fire here?

[*He begins to open the stove-door. In order to distract his attention, Bertha gives a startled cry and rushes over to the door, right, which* SHERIFF *is approaching as he goes to door, rear. The* SHERIFF *had no intention of entering door, right, and he looks at her in amazement.*]

BERTHA. Don't you dare go in there!

SHERIFF. What—what—You're hiding him after all!

[BEN *drops the stove-cover handle, and*

comes forward to join the sheriff.]

BERTHA. I'm not,—but I won't have my house searched in this outrageous manner.

SHERIFF. Stand aside.

BERTHA. Don't you dare to touch me! It isn't enough to accuse me of harboring a criminal but you have to subject me to this disgraceful search.

SHERIFF. Get out of the way. I'm going to see who's hid there.

BERTHA. If you do—

JACK. [*Interrupting from table where he is calmly eating*] What's the use of making such a fuss, Polly? Let them hunt if it amuses them. Come and eat your supper. It's getting cold.

[SHERIFF *and* BEN *go out through door, right.* BERTHA *goes back to the table sits down, drops her face into her hands, and sobs.*]

JACK. That was a close shave. I thought they had me when he began to open the stove-door. [*As* BERTHA *sobs.*] What's the matter?

BERTHA. I'm so ashamed—I'm so ashamed!

JACK. [*Eating calmly*] Of what?

BERTHA. Of you.

JACK. Me!

BERTHA. Yes. Why did you make me do it?

JACK. Make you! You did it of your own accord.

BERTHA. Yes, I know, I know,—but you should have stopped me.

JACK. [*Contemptuously*] And given myself up, I suppose.

BERTHA. Yes. Then you would at least have been a man.

JACK. And now I'm a coward?

BERTHA. Yes.

JACK. Thank you. [*Goes on eating.*]

BERTHA. Don't sneer. Oh, if you could have felt what I did. I wanted to shriek out at the top of my voice: "Here he is! Here he is! Don't you see him sitting there?"

JACK. Hush! they'll hear you. Why didn't you tell them then as long as you felt that way about it?

BERTHA. I don't know. I don't know.

JACK. [*Nodding towards gun*] You were afraid of that, I suppose.

BERTHA. No,—it wasn't that.

JACK. What was it then?

BERTHA. Hush! They're coming.

[*Enter* SHERIFF *and* BEN.]

SHERIFF. What do you mean by lying to us?

BERTHA. Lying!

SHERIFF. Yes. Making us believe that he was in there.

BERTHA. I didn't say he was.

SHERIFF. You made us think it though.

BERTHA. I'm sorry.—You see I was a little excited—about you searching my room. You know you wouldn't like to have strange people breaking into your house. Of course I know it isn't your fault. You have to do it. Won't you have a cup of tea before you start?

SHERIFF. Thank you, ma'am, we won't stop. He's a slick man, you know, and we have to get a hump on us if we're going to catch him. Blue Mine's half a mile up, you say?

BERTHA. Yes,—just at the end of the trail.

SHERIFF. Any houses about here?

BERTHA. No. There's a wooden shack behind this one. It's empty though. We keep it for a store-house.

SHERIFF. We'll search that first. [*To* BERTHA.] No objection, I hope?

BERTHA. None whatever, Sheriff. Take the lantern.

SHERIFF. Come along, Ben. [SHERIFF *and* BEN *go out, rear.*]

JACK. Why didn't you give me up?

[BERTHA *does not answer but sits still, star-*

ing straight in front of her.]

JACK. You had a chance then.

BERTHA. I know it.

JACK. Shall I call them back?

BERTHA. No.

JACK. At least let me thank you for what you have done.

BERTHA. No, no, you don't understand.

JACK. I understand enough to know that you have saved me.

BERTHA. That's just what I haven't done.

JACK. [*Taking another piece of bread*] Now, that's sentimental nonsense. Five minutes ago you were fighting for my life. You were splendid then. Now you're only preaching.

BERTHA. [*Laughing brokenly*] Preaching! I preaching!

JACK. Yes, like a good little Sunday school girl.

BERTHA. You don't understand. I preaching! Why, you don't know—you don't know or you wouldn't say that. But Jim—Jim, my husband, is a thief too.

JACK. Your husband—a thief!

BERTHA. Yes—a thief—just like you. He stole money—and then ran away—just like you. That's why we came out here to this God-for-

saken place. We were afraid—we're always afraid. Sometimes I feel as if I can't bear it any longer. It all happened five years ago and yet I never see anyone coming up the trail without feeling as if I were going to choke. I always think they are coming for him. I can't sleep nights, thinking about it. Now you know why I wanted to help you. I kept thinking of him—him—him—all the time, and I couldn't give you up—I couldn't. But it's all wrong. I shouldn't have done it, and you'll give yourself up, won't you? Don't you see that's the only thing to do?

JACK. You mean you are going to give me up?

BERTHA. No, no! I couldn't do that. But you will do it, won't you, you will do it?

[*Enter* SHERIFF *and* BEN.]

SHERIFF. Missus, the moon is coming up bright and clear, so we won't need your lantern after all.

BERTHA. Are you going up to the Blue Mine?

SHERIFF. Yes.

BERTHA. Then you might as well—

SHERIFF. [*Interrupting*] Hst!

BERTHA. What is it?

SHERIFF. [*After a pause*] Some one is com-

ing.

BERTHA. Coming! [*Aghast with dawning apprehension as she pictures the catastrophe of her husband's return*] Who—who can be coming here?

SHERIFF. Don't you hear him?

BERTHA. No.

SHERIFF. Hush—here he comes.

[*Clatter of horse's hoofs outside.* SHERIFF *and* BEN *withdraw to corner behind door. Enter* JIM BRYCE. *He closes door but does not see the* SHERIFF *and* BEN.]

BRYCE. Well, Bertha—ah, [*Seeing* JACK *at table*] a visitor?

BERTHA. [*Approaching her husband and speaking in a strained, expressionless voice*] Who are you?

BRYCE. Why—what's the matter? What are you looking at me like that for?

BERTHA. Who are you?

BRYCE. Who am I? Who am I? Bertha! Are you mad?

BERTHA. [*Same voice*] Who are you?

SHERIFF. [*Coming forward*] Yes—who are you?

BRYCE. [*Turning and seeing* SHERIFF *and* BEN] What? More visitors? Quite a com-

pany!

SHERIFF. You haven't told us your name.

BRYCE. My name! You say another word to me and there won't be enough left of you to plaster up an ant-hill.

BERTHA. Won't you please go?

BRYCE. Go!—What does all this mean? And who are you? [*To* JACK]—Yes, you sittin' over there with my coat on?

BEN. Now you had better go. That's her husband.

BRYCE. Husband! Husband! Somebody wake me up!

SHERIFF. You'll wake up soon enough, my man. Where's that paper? [*Hunts in pocket.*

BRYCE. What paper?

SHERIFF. [*Reading from paper*] "Five feet eight inches. Broad shouldered. Brown hair. Grey eyes. Dressed in khaki."

BRYCE. I'm locoed.

BEN. Pretty near except the khaki.

BRYCE. Clean locoed—I knew it! It wuz down in Black Gully. It came upon me then. Say, [*To* SHERIFF] have you ever felt anything crawlin' up to you—sort of nestlin' close to you?

SHERIFF. If you mean cattle—

BRYCE. [*Interrupting*] Naw—I mean some-

thin' you can't see—only feel. Well, it came over me down there in the gully. I tried to push it away but it kept comin' back again and again, all the time pressin' closer and closer. Then I began to ride.

SHERIFF. And came here?

BRYCE. Not then. I tried to get away from it and went up to Blue Mine.

SHERIFF *and* BEN. Blue Mine!

BRYCE. To see Cub. I ast him if he saw anythin' about me and he said "No," and all the time he wuz tellin' me it wuz nothin' but whiskey, I kept feelin' it crawlin' round my neck.

BEN. [*Curiously*] Is it there now?

BRYCE. Naw—it's gone now. That's why I came here.

SHERIFF. Here!

BRYCE. To see Bertha. You see, I'm home earlier than usual. I thought it wuz a warnin' that she wuz in danger. I wuz worried about her. That's all.

SHERIFF. And who are you?

BRYCE. I'm her husband. Anyway, I wuz before I got this loco spell.

SHERIFF. [*To* BERTHA] Do you know him?

BERTHA. I never saw him before in all my life.

SHERIFF. [*Reading from paper*] "Broad-shouldered. Brown—"

BRYCE. [*Interrupting*] That'll do,—that'll do. I've heard that once before and I don't like your literature. And let me tell you one thing. I've been on this here trail for the last six years, not counting August, and I've never struck a man yet without reason. I'm for peace and law and order but if I don't see you goin' down that trail out there in exactly five minutes, the slickest fighter in the Blue Mine district won't leave enough of you for the rest of the bunch to take a shot at. There's the door!

SHERIFF. My man, don't try to slip any of that over us. You're caught—cornered.

BRYCE. What do you mean?

SHERIFF. You're wanted.

BRYCE. For what?

SHERIFF. A little job you did down in Preston a while ago.

BRYCE. You've got the wrong man.

SHERIFF. I guess not. We know our man when we see him. Why, we've been hot on your trail since yesterday morning. Lost it once or twice up here in the mountain but we were too near to miss you. Come along. [*Puts hand on* BRYCE'S *shoulder.*]

BERTHA. [*Shrieks*] No!

SHERIFF. What!

BERTHA. I can't bear it!—I can't bear it!

SHERIFF. What is he to you?

BERTHA. Nothing—only—only—

SHERIFF. Only what? Do you know anything about this man?

BRYCE. One moment, Sheriff.

SHERIFF. She must answer or decline to answer.

BRYCE. That's just what I wanted to tell her.

SHERIFF. Do you know this man? [*Pointing to* BRYCE. *Pause.*] Declines to answer. Did you ever see him before? [*Pause.*] Declines to answer. Why this change? You answered these same questions quickly enough before. Have you any motive in shielding him? [*Pause.*] Declines to answer. As your silence shows you know something about the robbery, even if you don't know who the guilty one is, I must place you under arrest too.

BERTHA. No, no, don't do that. You've made a terrible mistake. I'll tell you all I know.

JACK. [*Rising from table*] No!

SHERIFF *and* BEN. [*Turning*] What?

JACK. [*Coming forward*] I'll tell them myself.

SHERIFF. You! Do you know anything about this?

JACK. Perhaps I do.

SHERIFF. Well, why didn't you tell us before?

JACK. [*To* BRYCE] You came on horseback, didn't you?

BRYCE. Yes. My horse is just outside the door now.

JACK. That simplifies everything.

SHERIFF. How?

JACK. Why, you weren't following a man on horseback, were you?

SHERIFF. It's easy enough for a man to pick up a horse if that man is trying to escape.

JACK. But the man you were following was on foot, wasn't he?

SHERIFF. Yes.

BEN. When he left Preston.

JACK. Well, then you have the wrong man. That's easy to see.

SHERIFF. How do you know?

JACK. Let me show you. Here's Preston. [*Diagramming scene on stage. Places chair down front to indicate position of Preston.*] Here's Proctor. [*Places another chair.*]

SHERIFF. Yes.

JACK. Here's the bridge [*placing gun on the floor*] over—what's the name of that creek?

SHERIFF. Silver creek.

JACK. That's it. Here's Cullom Road [*walking towards table.*]

SHERIFF. Yes.

JACK. Leading around this way towards the mountain.

SHERIFF *and* BEN. Yes. Go on.

JACK. Here's the trail. [*Opens door.*]

SHERIFF. What's that to do with it?

JACK. Just wait. I'll show you. Now you say the thief started from Preston—[*Places hand on chair "Preston."*]

SHERIFF. Yes.

BEN. Yesterday morning.

JACK. And went over here to Proctor? [*Goes to chair "Proctor."*]

SHERIFF. Got there about three o'clock.

JACK. And then went down Cullom's Road?

SHERIFF. Yes.

JACK. There's just where you're mistaken.

SHERIFF *and* BEN. What?

JACK. He never took Cullom's Road.

SHERIFF. How do you know?

JACK. Because he was headed for the trail and the road would take him a mile out of his

way. No,—he went straight across the gully in this way, [*Goes halfway across room*]—dashed for the trail [*leaps for door*] and was gone!

[*Exit, closing door.*]

SHERIFF. What—what—what—

[*There is a sound of horse's hoofs outside and then the* SHERIFF *and* BEN *rush for the door.* BERTHA *reaches it before they do, and stands facing them.*]

SHERIFF. Let us out!

BERTHA. No, give him a chance.

SHERIFF. Then, he—

BERTHA. Yes,—he's the man.

BRYCE. You know, Sheriff, it's easy enough for a man to pick up a horse if that man is trying to escape.

Curtain.

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